

Dr. Marv Wilson, Prophets, Session 23, Final Words on Micah, Isaiah

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This is Dr. Marv Wilson in his teaching on the Prophets. This is session 23, Final Words on Micah and Teaching on the Book of Isaiah.

All right, I'm ready to begin.

Let's pray to begin the week. Father, we thank you for this day. The start of another day, another week. We are glad that you, each day, talk to us. You talk to us through the Spirit who lives within us. You talk to us through the wise counsel of godly friends.

You talk to us through the pages of church history as we ponder what you've done over the ages through your people, the spirit-indwelled people. You talk to us through Scripture. We thank you that Scripture is alive.

Indeed, it has a message, not just for us but for every generation. Help us to listen as you speak. Help us to take to ourselves those things that will make us more each day into the people of God you have called us to be. For your help this hour, I ask for your presence with me as a teacher and each of us as we learn together. Through Christ our Lord, I pray. Amen.

Okay, this is our week for our Passover Seder. Just a final check-in here. This will be, again, a celebration.

Singing, liturgy, poetry, eating history as each item on the table is a reminder of the Exodus, redemption. So, we should have a good time now. Kristen, you'll be driving.

Did you say to yourself it's a total of six? It's a total of seven. Oh, okay. Great.

Very good. Is anyone else here driving? Okay, I think we will just about fit everyone in. I have a number of other cars that I'm just double-checking.

Now, just a couple of final words on Micah. And then today I want to go into Isaiah, who is a contemporary of Micah. Where Isaiah has a lot to say about the Messiah, it's not surprising that Micah also has material on the Messiah.

Just wanted to go back and mention a couple things about chapter 5. You, O Bethlehem Ephrata. Now, this passage in 5.2, which is picked up in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew 2.5 equates the birthplace of Jesus with this particular passage. So, is this passage messianic? Does it speak to us of the Christ? Well, the Matthewan

Hebraic Christian community certainly wanted to make those connections to the Hebrew Bible.

Ephrata is the region around Bethlehem. And this passage is a picture of not just the Messiah's coming through that tribe of Judah, indicated first of all in, you'll remember, Genesis 49:8-10. Jacob blesses his children and says, Judah, that ruler's staff isn't going to depart from you until he comes to whom it belongs.

Judah, you'll be like a lion or a lion's cub. Speaking of the king of the jungle and his royalty. It's interesting as Mark Chagall paints his 12 stained glass windows in the synagogue of the largest hospital in the Middle East, which is Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

The window for Judah is royal red with a picture of a crown being supported with two hands. Taking the imagery from this 49th chapter. So, he would be the ruler.

David, of course, epitomized this as the anointed one after God's own heart, the warrior king. And he came from this town of Bethlehem, and then there was a greater David to come. The deeper meaning of his origins being from of old, or his goings forth literally are from of old.

The deepest meaning of this, of course, is that Jesus, as we know from other texts in Scripture, has a pre-existence. Indeed, he is from everlasting. And John's Gospel, which in the first chapter equates the eternal logos with the Father who is present.

The passage also speaks to us of the fact that this Messianic age will have a removal of evils, social and religious. And you'll notice that in verse 4, this one is like David, who feeds his flock. In the strength of the Lord, the Messiah is always the agent of the Almighty, and they shall dwell secure, for now he will be great to the ends of the earth.

This is the ultimate outworking of the Messianic age. And the departure of the evils of the world and the bringing forth of what had been spoken of in chapter 4. Beating swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks. People dwelled securely outside city walls, under a vine and a fig tree, where agriculture went on in the community.

So you didn't have to look for protection inside the walls. So, Micah does speak to us of a Messianic age, which involves some radical changes in the removal of the evils of society, political changes, religious restoration of this world, anticipating what Isaiah will speak of in a renewed earth, a new heaven, and a new earth. The other passage I briefly wanted to go back to in chapter 6, I talked about the RIV, which is the Hebrew word for accusation and case.

The word for setting forth a brief against someone who is being charged. So, it's an accusation. This covenant lawsuit, if you will, in chapter 6, is against Israel and ushers in the third main part of the book.

Each of the three main segments of Micah. Hear or listen. Shema.

And this last one, beginning in chapter 6. Shema, listen to what the Lord says. Stand up and plead your case before the mountains. And again, the mountains and the hills represent the jury.

They represent symbols of unchangeable justice, perhaps. The courtroom, standing there silently, listening to Yahweh's indictment of His people. Now, the prophet is a spokesperson for someone else.

So, Yahweh is delivering His case here through the prophet. And Yahweh pleads through the prophet, and as the mountains and hills sit in silence, in silent judgment, they listen as attorney Micah presents the case. The Lord's case goes back to the fact that God's mercies have been abundant upon His people.

His past mercies. Wednesday night, together, we will celebrate the greatest miracle God performed in the Hebrew Bible. And there it is, in verse 4. Everything, in a sense, in Jewish history goes back to the Exodus and Sinai as the twin pillars that constituted the nation, which showed God's redeeming power and His covenant love, giving them revelation.

And so, those two things compacted together over a period of 50 days, which Jewish people annually, for several thousand years, celebrate. Passover, 50 days later, Shavuot, Pentecost, the day the Christian church was born. And so, He says, I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, redeemed you from slavery.

And so, this was a miraculous liberation. But God did not leave Israel alone. He gave them these tremendous leaders, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

One of the few places outside of the Pentateuch itself where these three are mentioned in a cluster. Great leaders. And if you want to know what the Bible says about women in leadership capacities in Bible times, keep your eye on Miriam, who, at the Exodus, is the first woman to minister that ministry gift with the other women at the Shirat HaYam, the Song of the Sea that is being sung in celebration of the Exodus.

God even overrules blessing Israel when Balak wanted to curse Israel coming through Moab. Balaam blesses Israel as they continued this journey. So, God has a case against Israel because He was a gracious God.

And He made these provisions, what are called in verse 5, saving acts. These were delivering acts. He's a God of deliverance.

This is a key theme, because when we come into Isaiah, that's the name. Isaiah means Yahweh delivers. And these are the great acts of deliverance.

God delivers Israel from her enemies who would have cursed her. God delivers her from the tyrants in Egypt. And so, because of God's past mercies, even He alludes to Jericho, because remember your journey to Gilgal.

Gilgal is the first place Israel set up shop after they crossed the Jordan, right down the Jordan Valley, right next door to Jericho. So, God brought them all the way in across the Jordan River. Israel had a false conception of what God expected from them.

And when people turn too much to ceremony, ritual, and perfunctory religious exercise, and that I suspect is in part what some Christians balk at, and in my opinion, rightly so, when Christianity is described as a religion, religion properly has this idea coming from two Latin roots, to link again or to bind again, and people are bound together through various sorts of rituals that are performed. Religion is more than the performance of rituals; either doing them yourself or observing somebody else who puts them on for you to perform rituals. The essence of biblical religion is relational, not ritual.

And this is all about this God who did these great miracles for Israel. Through the wilderness. And while the ritual was, in many ways, a ceremony, a way of helping Israel understand her faith, it always pointed to the God behind the ritual.

And a God who required Israel to live a certain way. Israel was too hung up on ritual, and so the prophets come along and they correct that. And we've seen this again and again in the prophets.

So Israel is speaking in their self-defense before the law court and building the crescendo here. Note the progression of the five questions, each one bigger than the previous. What if I come with burnt offerings? How about calves a year old? How about thousands of rams? Ten thousand rivers of oil are my firstborn for my transgression.

And so, Israel's would-be answer is an intensification of the sacrificial system. Jesus didn't pick up on this and go the road of, we need more laws, we need more regulations, we need more rituals. Jesus' road was very personal.

He says if you're there at the altar offering your gift, and you think to yourself, whoops, I've got a problem with somebody. And I've got to patch that relationship. I've got to reconcile, make right.

We have an estrangement. You leave your gift at the altar, which is Jesus' way of saying, forget the ritual and go patch up the relationship with your brother. Then go back and take care of the gift at the altar.

Jesus always put people above the technical requirements of the law. He would heal on the Sabbath, even though people didn't always like that. He would pluck grain on the Sabbath because *pichua hanepesh* was the highest commandment in the Bible.

The preservation of life took commandment over other legislation or laws. Jesus took a personalized approach. And so what does the Lord require? Micah sums it all up.

He has shown you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? And so those three cardinal tenets of Hebrew religion, the doing of *mishpat*, doing the right thing, *mishpat*, justice, fairness, equity in your dealings with people, the *hesed*, the loyal love to the Almighty that allows you to deal kindly and lovingly with your fellow neighbor. Finally, I talked at the end of the last hour about *zenyut*, which is a relatively rare word in the Hebrew Bible but is a call to modesty. Don't flaunt it.

Don't get arrogant about your faith. Don't be presumptive. Walk before the Almighty with a humble spirit, with a careful, delicate way of moving.

What is in other parts of the Bible is sometimes referred to as a lowly heart. And so, when you're walking before the King of the Universe, you walk circumspectly. You walk very carefully before the Lord.

So, this is the way Micah ends things. It's how you live that's important. Not the rituals you perform.

And while rituals may indeed be important and were required of every Jew, they always pointed beyond themselves. When religion becomes mechanical, as we saw in Amos 5, rather than personal, pointing beyond itself. It did not serve God's intended purpose.

Alright, with that, I then want to talk about Isaiah today. I have an outline for Isaiah. I will distribute, save a little time.

This just gives a broad overview of how the book is constructed. And you'll observe that there are three main segments to the book. Book 1-39 is primarily events that take place in the Prophet's own day.

Judgment on Judah's sins and the four nations around Judah are also being judged. Then we come to this fascinating section in the book 24-27, which some scholars refer to as Isaiah's apocalypse.

Where now he projects way into the future. What's going to happen to God's people? What's going to happen to this earth? And what about the resurrection of the dead? Very important part. Because your Jewish friends believed in the resurrection of the dead before you did.

That's one thing Judaism gave to Christianity was a belief in the resurrection of the dead. And two of the strongest passages of belief in the resurrection of the dead come out of this Isaiah's apocalypse. Then there's a historical interlude 36-39 which tells us about Isaiah's sickness.

Tells us about a number of other things happening between Isaiah and the rulers of his day. And then the final section of the book is one of comfort. Primarily to the exiles.

The promise of redemption through suffering. And out of this comes our great Isaiah 53 material. And the ultimate universal reign of God through the future glory of Zion as he ends the book in the final seven chapters.

We will come back and deal with certain aspects of that from here to the end of the course. What I would like to do today is to give an introduction to Isaiah. Who this person was.

Sort of the big picture about the prophet. His background. And later this week we will talk about Isaiah's literary style.

His book is a poetic masterpiece. And we will also talk about the problem of the authorship of Isaiah. Yeshayahu is his name.

Yeshayahu. We don't get too many students at college with that name. But we had one two years ago.

He's now graduated. The fact Hebrew reads from the right to the left. Several of you have studied Hebrew and you will recognize the root yesha which means to deliver, to save, to liberate.

And the yahoo on the end is a shortened form of Yahweh. So, the name Isaiah has reference to Yahweh saves or the salvation is of Yahweh. He's sometimes referred to as the evangelical prophet because the word evangelical comes from a Greek word, euangelion, meaning good news, joyous announcement.

Or, in one word, gospel. And Isaiah holds out God's good news and articulates that more than any other prophet. God's good news ultimately, of course, in the coming of the Messiah.

But we'll see how the gospels did not invent this idea of good news but it really comes right smack out of Isaiah. So, he's the evangelical prophet or sometimes he's called the messianic prophet. John 12:41 says he saw the glory of Christ.

As far as John's gospel is concerned, he says that Isaiah saw forward to the Christ to come. Now, the Hebrew root here in this word gospel or good news is b'ser. Many times you will hear in a year somebody from, well you'll probably hear him tonight if you at 11.35 turn on Channel 5 on television, Martin Bashir, who's a Pakistani Christian now and he's on Nightline who took over when Ted Koppel, a number of years ago, retired.

Nightline is a news format kind of program. The word Bashir, Bashira or variations of that are often found in the Arab Christian world. When you name a child, you are using the word good news.

Gospel can be a first name or a family name. I'm pointing out to you it's a Semitic root and it means to announce, tell or bring good news or glad tidings. The way this word gospel, good news, glad tidings, comes into Isaiah typically is by this word Mivaseret.

Now, if you leave Jerusalem and head down toward Tel Aviv, if you're heading out to the airport, you will on the main highway see a sign that says Mivaseret, which gives its name to one of the enclosed suburbs of Jerusalem today. Mivaseret is a participial form in Hebrew which comes from the same root, baser. And so, looking at how it is used, originally, before we see how it is used in the New Testament, Isaiah 40, verse 9. I already said chapter 40 was, Nachamu, Nachamu Ami.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people. Comfort who? Well, the exiles needed comfort. They were there in Babylon.

And so, chapter 40, verse 9 says, You who bring good tidings, Mivaseret, to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, or O Zion, bringer of good tidings, lift up your voice. And here, God cares for His people.

He's about to redeem them. And that is to release them from their exile and to bring them home. And if you look at 52.7, you get another glimpse of this.

Of course, there's an anthem you will hear in Christian circles. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those. And 52.7, Isaiah says, How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news.

Mivaseret. They announce or tell or bring good news. Now, Paul in Romans 10 and 15 picks up this same expression.

Just to remind you of that. Where Paul is saturated with the book of Isaiah in his writings. 10.15, Paul says, How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

And he's doing it, of course, in a chapter which is very Christological. And the fact that he's calling people to believe God's good news in Christ. The One who was raised from the dead.

So, those words found in 52:7, why would the feet of those who bring good news be spoken about here? Well, the picture here is probably one of a messenger who's coming back to give the good news to the people. That the battle is over. That the victory has been won.

And the king and the people want to receive the Mivaseret. The announcement of good news. And this one comes and proclaims peace.

And he proclaims salvation, which means deliverance. And so, this prefigures, in a sense, what God's good news is going to be in the New Testament. A joyous announcement about God's work in Christ.

His life, His suffering, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, and His second coming. The whole package is about Christ and His work of redemption on the part of the sinner. And that is God's good news.

We call it the Evangel. If you're in modern Greece, and an obstetrician opens the door to an expectant father waiting for that word, his wife is in labor, he would say, I have some euangelion for you. I have some good news for you.

A joyous announcement. You're the proud father of an 11 pound 7 ounce, a good sized one. And it's healthy.

Okay, that's good news. Alright, God's good news in Christ then. And this, as good news, might be delivered by a messenger after hearing the victory is won, that peace is announced, and there's that sense that peace is announced.

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. There's peace with God. And then the peace of God comes to the believer through God's good news.

Alright, so the LXX uses euangelion here. God's good news from Mevassarit. A few things about how the New Testament uses Isaiah.

The New Testament quotes from and alludes to Isaiah over 400 times, which means the New Testament writers were saturated with Messianic or Isaiahic thinking. Of the 66 chapters in Isaiah, 47 of those 66 chapters are alluded to or are quoted from, which means the whole book of Isaiah was very well known in Old Testament times. At Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, some 15 different manuscripts of Isaiah were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

I've said before, and I'll say it again, the three most frequently used texts based on two main sources, quotations in the New Testament and numbers of manuscripts found at Qumran, indicate Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Isaiah were the big three. Copied more often. Cited more often.

And I often urge Christians who are interested in asking the question, where should I begin in reading the Old Testament? Well, certainly in making the greater number of links, connecting links between Testaments, those are probably three very important books to begin with. 96 times Deuteronomy is cited in the New Testament. Not to speak of the Ten Commandments that are repeated a number of times in the New Testament.

From Deuteronomy 5. Not to speak that Jesus said the most important commandment in the Old Testament is found in Deuteronomy. Love the Lord your God with all you've got. So, there's a lot of important material there.

Not to speak of the temptations of Christ. Man shall not live by bread alone. You shall not tempt the Lord your God.

When Jesus puts down Satan, those three temptations, two out of three times he quotes from Deuteronomy in his own personal life. So, the importance of that material New Testament writers draw on it. In Psalms, 20% of the citations in the New Testament come from the Psalms.

So those were very, very important too. And you keep in mind, you couldn't be admitted to the highest order of clergy by the year 400 until you had committed to memory all 150 Psalms. So, it was a very oral culture.

And the Psalms became the hymn book of the early church. Paul says to the Corinthians, when you come together, one of you has a Psalmon, which is a loan word. As we know, that word comes into English today.

Psalmon. So, people would come together and share a didache, a teaching. They would share a psalmon.

They'd get up and recite Psalms. One of the most unbelievable experiences I ever had with a Gordon College student came a number of years back, when I made the

statement I just gave to you about learning Psalms. I had an opportunity to put on a 90-minute program in a local synagogue.

The rabbi said, well, why don't you do a program with the Gordon students on a Christian appreciation of Hebraic heritage? So, I asked two of my classes, whom I invited to attend, if you were going to be part of this program, what would you like to do? Think about it. Then turn in a card to me.

So, I had this student having to be studying Hebrew with me then. And he wasn't doing too much Hebrew for five or six weeks. And I didn't know why.

He ended up telling me a week before we finalized everything about the program. He says, I've been memorizing Psalms. Not because I want to be part of the highest order of clergy but because you said it was so important in the life of early Christianity. That's why I haven't been doing too much Hebrew.

So, I said to him, I said, John, if you've been learning Psalms, how about getting up in front of the synagogue and quoting from the Psalms? And I thought I'd joke with him. I said, well, why don't you get up there and recite Psalm 119, which, as many of you know, is 176 verses? He says, as a matter of fact, I learned that first because I knew that would be the worst and the hardest to learn.

Sure, I'll get up and recite that. Well, I had about 15 Gordon students I had to get on the program, so I knew that it would be a whole evening just doing Psalm 119. I said, well, you can't do the whole Psalm.

It would just take too long. Well, John says, when we get to the synagogue, why don't you tell me what verses you want me to do, and I'll just do those. I said, are you sure you'll do that? He said sure.

Now, he learned, actually, over those five or six weeks, six Psalms. Sorry, 15 Psalms. Not six Psalms.

He learned 15 Psalms. He learned Psalm 119. So, I called him up, and he didn't know this, and he recited before the synagogues verses 50 through 100.

Psalm 119. And did it flawlessly. It was absolutely breathtaking to hear all our Jewish friends listening to a Gordon College student recite Psalms.

Their Psalms. And it was a real challenge to everyone. Now, he knows 15 Psalms by heart.

He didn't have to go to Gordon College to do that. He did that on his own. But he got the idea at Gordon College.

Which is one of the best things I think he took from Gordon. Alright, for Paul the Apostle and others, they were saturated with these Psalms, and they drew widely from them. And the neat part of Psalm 119 is it reminds us how everything in the Hebrew Bible goes back to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

Because Psalm 119 is a celebration of the first five books of the Bible and a call to return to them. The statutes, the commandments, the ordinances, the words, the precepts, the statutes. All of these things that God laid out in the first five books of the Bible, this Psalm rejoices in how these things work in the believer's life and why they are to be held on to.

So, the New Testament has a lot of material from Isaiah as well as Deuteronomy and Psalms. A little bit about the family background of Isaiah. Looking at Isaiah, to get a bigger picture of this for a second.

The kings of Judah. King Uzziah and Isaiah were apparently cousins. And how did this work? Well, the kings of Judah, starting with Joash, Amaziah, and then we come to Uzziah who is around 790 to 740.

That's why we date Isaiah precisely with 740 because Isaiah 6 says, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. So, we know Isaiah's commissioning in Isaiah 6 there is tied in with Uzziah's death. And he continued on down through the reign of Hezekiah.

And, according to tradition, was put to death under Manasseh. Now, Isaiah was the son of Amoz. A-M-O-Z is spelled with a different Hebrew letter than A-M-O-S.

This is Amoz. Now, according to Jewish tradition, he was the brother of King Amaziah. Thus, Isaiah would be a cousin to King Uzziah.

If Joash had two sons, it's Amaziah and Amoz. There's an interesting reference in Hebrews 11.37. Does it allude to Isaiah? Some think it may. Let me read it to you.

It's the faith of the judges and the prophets. And what happened to these people, like Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets? It talks about how some suffered mocking and scourging and even chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned. They were sawed in two. They were killed by the sword and went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated.

That expression, sawn in two. Yes. Who is what? Two Isaiah.

Who is what? Oh, Amaziah. Oh, okay. Amaziah is the son of Joash.

Remember there was a great revival under Joash who repaired the temple. It had been an ill repair. And people brought their money to the temple and this money was collected in a large chest.

Then Amaziah follows, and then Uzziah. So that's how it breaks down. So, Joash has two children, Amaziah and Amoz.

That would make Isaiah and Uzziah cousins. Now, back to the Isaiah 11.37 passage. Could that be a reference to Manasseh? According to one of the early non-biblical sources, it speaks of Isaiah's death as coming under the reign of Manasseh and that he was sawed in two.

So, that's the tradition. It's not substantiated biblically, but it is part of an extra-biblical early Jewish source. Manasseh was the worst king of all. Arch idolater of Jewish history. He did nothing right, according to the Bible, except he repented the day before he died. That's the only good thing he did.

Everything else in the Bible is a catalog of the vices of this long-ruling king of Judah, who reigned for over half of a century and was the worst of the worst. Isaiah had two children. One had the name Shier Joshua, who is mentioned in 7.3 of Isaiah.

Each of his two children bore names that were symbolic. Shier Joshua simply means a remnant will come back. Shub/shuv means return.

Shehar is the idea of a remnant. So, a remnant will return was a word of hope. The other name is like saying Salt of La Machia for the Red Sox.

It's the longest name of any professional baseball player that takes the whole back of his uniform. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz would be a long one to call him in for dinner. Macher means quick or hasten.

Shalal means the booty that comes from the spoils of war. Hash is the idea of quick. The final B-A-Z is to the prey or the spoil.

Hasten to the booty, quick to the spoil. We'll talk about the historical background in which that occurs. The last thing I mentioned was the Dead Sea Scrolls.

All of you, I hope sometime in your life, will go to the Israel Museum. One of the seven main sections is the Shrine of the Book. On display there is a scroll about 30 feet long which is a replica of this Isaiah scroll that was found at Qumran, the entire scroll.

The original was there for a number of years, but because of the atmospheric conditions and wanting to preserve it and keep it from deterioration, they made a facsimile copy which you can look at, walk around, and see the entire length of the scroll which highlights the museum today. It is one of some 15 different manuscripts of Isaiah that take us back to before the time of Jesus. Some of the earliest biblical texts that we have, of course, come from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

All right, that will be it for today, and we'll pick up here on Wednesday.

This is Dr. Marv Wilson in his teaching on the Prophets. This is session 23, Final Words on Micah and Teaching on the Book of Isaiah.